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ABSTRACT

Resulting from a concern for a need to develop strong communication links between school media specialists and public librarians, this publication presents ideas and examples of cooperative activities that are, for the most part, easy to implement. While not all activities may be necessary or even appropriate in all situations, they are presented with the intention of increasing interest and stimulating discussion. The publication opens with an examination of various levels of cooperation: no cooperation, informal cooperation, formal cooperation, and formalized cooperation. A discussion of the objectives and benefits of cooperation follows, and 17 steps necessary for effective cooperation are outlined. Sections on sharing ideas, materials, and personnel, and on joint endeavors are followed by a checklist of activities. A 14-item bibliography is included. (THC)

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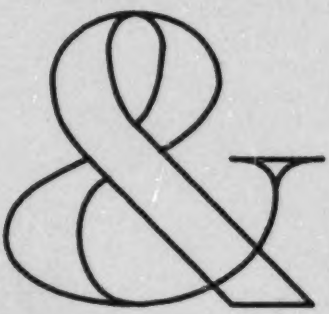
THE COOPERATIVE SPIRIT:

SCHOOL MEDIA CENTERS



THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Prepared for the

National Association of State Educational Media Professionals

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The Cooperative Spirit: School Media Centers & The Public Library

INTRODUCTION:

This publication came about as the result of a concern for the need to develop strong communication links between school media specialists and public librarians. When there is good communication and understanding, cooperation can result which will benefit the common patron - the student.

The ideas for and examples of cooperative activities included in this publication are, for the most part, easy to implement. While not all may be necessary or even appropriate for all situations, they are presented with the intention of sparking an interest and stimulating discussion.

My thanks to Harold and Rosanne Krubsack for their efforts in assisting in the preparation of this publication.

Ralph Whiting
Past President
NASTEMP

Prepared for the

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE EDUCATIONAL MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

by Harold and Rosanne Krubsack
Edited by Ralph Whiting
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LEVELS OF COOPERATION

Let's examine the levels of cooperation and some characteristics to help you recognize where you are in the hierarchy of school/public library cooperation.

NO COOPERATION

Easy to recognize. Nothing is happening. No contacts have been made. No desire to cooperate exists.

INFORMAL COOPERATION

Good!, you've made the contact. You know the name of your counterpart at the public or school library media center. You've made contact over reference questions. You're probably using assignment alerts. You're on each other's mailing lists. You share a cup of coffee (tea or other appropriate beverage) occasionally.

FORMAL COOPERATION

You regularly share information and opportunities for professional growth. School classes schedule regular annual visits to the public library. You announce and promote each other's activities in your newsletters. You make contact in your professional associations, perhaps even riding together to meetings and conferences.

FORMALIZED COOPERATION

There are written policies and procedures indicating you are cooperating. You share union lists of periodicals, reference materials, non-print materials, and so on. You plan and celebrate National Library Week together. You meet together on a regular, scheduled basis. There may be statutory provisions for cooperation.

LET'S COOPERATE

Cooperation between school and public libraries happens regularly and at various levels. It happens between one school library media center and one public library at the local level. It happens among several school library media centers and several public libraries covering a large geographic area. And it happens between multiple school district library media centers, multiple public libraries, university libraries, special libraries, and multicounty library systems.

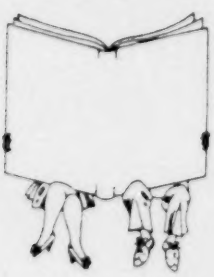
What are the objectives of cooperation? Why get involved in cooperation? One motive for cooperation is money (this appears to be a prime motive for many other activities also). By cooperating, you can stretch your library dollars.

Another objective is to fill in service gaps or needs. You may be able to offer services to your users that were not previously available.

Cooperation can save time. Cooperation initially takes time, but once you have the system in place, you can save time when that unusual request comes in. Cooperative purchases can save time. Just knowing what other libraries have available can save time. You can use all this saved time to improve service or to develop other cooperative efforts.

Cooperation can be stimulating. It provides for professional and intellectual interaction which result in personal and professional growth. It gives you new and expanded contacts with professionals in your field.

What is cooperation? Generically, cooperation is *"getting along well together on a mutually beneficial endeavor."* This is a fine definition, but for our purposes let's be more specific. School/public library cooperation is systematic planning, careful implementation, continual evaluation, and constant communication. Cooperation is a commitment of time and professional skills to improving library service for your clients. Cooperation doesn't just happen, it takes an effort on your part to make it happen.



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GETTING INVOLVED

How does this happen? What makes it happen? Let's examine how you can become involved in school/public library cooperation. Let's look at the steps necessary for effective cooperation. These steps are not necessarily written in the order in which they occur. Some may come before or after others, depending on your local situation. In all cases, however, item number 1 must be the initial step.

1. YOU take the first step. YOU make contact with your school/public library counterpart. If you don't, cooperation will not take place.

2. Have a telephone in each facility. Sounds simple enough, but many school library media centers do not have telephones and must rely on the phone in the principal's office. Having to walk down the hall or down a flight of stairs can effectively kill use of telephone exchanges. A readily available telephone has an amazing effect on cooperation.

3. Involve the people who control the money--school principal, superintendent, library board, and others. You must have their approval eventually, so it's best to involve them early.

4. Establish mutually supportive goals which are clear and within the capabilities of libraries involved. These goals should be designed to foster cooperation.

5. Examine all collections. Determine the strengths and weaknesses of each collection. Examine personnel skills, services, and client needs. Discuss common interests and contributions of staff time and money. Cooperation is a reciprocal agreement, and each member must consider what is offered by the others as well as what they have to offer others. Agencies that depend upon each other for resources are most likely to cooperate.

6. Communicate. Continue to communicate regularly. The potential for cooperation increases as the frequency and quality of communication increases. Communication is the basis for networking.

7. Keep staff, administration, and boards informed. This is part of your communication responsibility. Keep these people involved, as you need their support.

8. Interpret existing policies and regulations as broadly as possible rather than as restrictively as possible. Policies are meant to be servants, not the other way around. However, don't tear down any policy "fences" until you find out why they were originally created.

9 Establish regular meetings. Make the cooperative effort an integral part of your work routine.

10 Provide examples of cooperative activities that require little or no funds and a minimum of time, such as accepting each other's borrower's cards. Allocate funds and time to become involved in cooperative efforts.

11 Seek opportunities to meet staff from other types of libraries. Become acquainted with them and their collections, services, and policies. Involve them in cooperative ventures.

12 Disseminate information about activities, projects, and programs that show involvement in interlibrary cooperation. Get these items into local newspapers. Establish a newsletter for cooperative members. Send the newsletter to libraries you wish to begin cooperative programs with, but that are not yet involved. Send the newsletter to administrators and boards.

13 Examine the possibility of involving other types of libraries in the area, such as university, technical, medical, business, or industry libraries. You are sharing locally, now is the time to expand to include special libraries and a larger geographic area. This can result in networking opportunities.

14 Encourage the development of union lists or data bases that identify resources available for sharing.

15 Review local and state regulations and actively work to change them where they inhibit cooperation. Actively support the establishment of a state-level network coordinating unit responsible for library network leadership, development, and services.

16 Communicate. Hey!, this was item six. Well, here it is again. Actually, we never left it at all. It's part of each item. Continual communication is necessary. Cooperation is based on collaborative relationships, and these relationships flourish only when there is continual communication. Share your concerns and needs with other members.

17 Don't give up.

In summary, cooperation is a developmental process. Generally you begin with information and personal needs, move to broader needs and more task-oriented and management concerns, and then to more concern about the impact you are having. Begin with the simple, easy-to-implement ideas, and move on to the more sophisticated goals.

Above all, making cooperation work takes PEOPLE. If there is anything that makes cooperation work, it is PEOPLE. Those people are YOU and your counterparts in other libraries and media centers.

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SHARING IDEAS

What are some specific activities that school library media center staff and public library staff can do together? The following are but a few of the many ideas.

Borrowers Cards

There are any number of easy-to-do cooperative projects at the one-to-one level between public library and school library media center. Probably the easiest project to set up is **accepting each other's lending cards** for checking out materials at either facility.

Assignment Alert

Another simple cooperative effort to set up is an **assignment alert**. This type of cooperation is going on in many communities. It consists basically of the school library media specialist, in cooperation with the school faculty, providing the public librarian with some formalized notification of upcoming student assignments which may result in students using the public library. The public librarian can then get appropriate materials ready, and on reserve if necessary, for the students who are working on this assignment. Although this is a simple form of cooperation, it does take an on-going effort on the part of all participants, the school library media specialist, the school faculty, and the public librarian. Continual communication, as in all cooperative efforts, is essential.

Union Lists

A number of districts cooperate by **compiling union lists** of periodical holdings, index holdings, nonprint holdings, or other items of mutual interest. From these lists, they can determine what is available in area libraries. In many cases this can lead to cooperative purchases, which may eliminate much duplicate purchasing and make it possible to provide a wider range of materials and information to the patrons in a geographic area.

One school district in Utah with 12 elementary, 2 junior high, and two high schools is planning with the city's public library to connect each other via computer. The end result will be that a student in any of the schools will be able to check via the terminal (it can be at home, in the school, or in the public library) and immediately find out if the item – print or nonprint – is available in any of the other 16 collections. Interloan procedures then will make it available to the student. Thus, the young person has over 150,000 items to choose from instead of the 4-6,000 one in his or her own school.

Equipment Sharing

Cooperative **equipment sharing** programs are popular. These may involve a school's making its video or computer equipment available to the public through the public library during the summer months. Occasionally, this sharing continues through the school year, but because of the high use of this equipment in the schools during the school year, it is generally difficult to make it available to other users. School district policies must allow for this type of sharing and use.

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Equipment Repair

The school may serve as the repair center for the public library or may serve as coordinator for repair. The school may also provide advice on the selection and bidding of AV equipment if the public librarian is not as familiar with that process.

Other Ideas

1. Sponsor a young adults' or children's book club. (This could also be a "joint endeavor.")
2. Supply the school instructional materials center (IMC) with public library card application forms.
3. Exchange newsletters.
4. Refer students and teachers to the public library through memos, posters, and so on.
5. Return public library books directly to the schools, where they are picked up by the public library staff.
6. Provide the public library with a school calendar of events.

SHARING MATERIALS

You loan or exchange materials for specific periods of time. You provide for delivery of materials to all libraries.

Curriculum Materials

Display new curriculum materials (i.e., new reading texts) in the public library so the community can see them. Also place a set of school curriculum guides in the public library to provide the public librarian with information about the school curriculum.

Computer Software

Where rights to copy are acquired, share computer software.

Display Materials

Share realia, maps, and globes during the summer with the public library.

Microfilm

The public library may access the high school's microfilmed back issues of periodicals, and photocopies of articles in current periodicals or reference books can be made available through the public library to school patrons.

Selection/Reference Materials

Share materials selection aids and expensive reference materials.

SHARE PERSONNEL

You share your skills with each other by planning and participating in joint workshops, reading programs, summer programs. You develop townwide, citywide or regional activities.

Some of the many possibilities are listed below.

Ride Together

A great deal of sharing can take place while school media specialists and public librarians ride together to meetings and conferences. Take advantage of the opportunity not only to save travel dollars but also to share valuable traveling time discussing items of mutual interest. Have lunch together at least once a month.

Exchange Roles

"To walk a mile in my shoes" is an important concept. If it can be worked out, exchange roles for a half or full day to learn how your counterpart functions. If that is not possible, at least visit their program. Or invite the public librarian to the school to give book talks to students and/or staff. A monthly "brown bag" book talk may be of interest to teachers who wish to keep up on current best sellers, young adult novels, and so on.

Attend a Staff Meeting

By attending at least one of your counterparts' staff meetings, you learn more about their operation, concerns, and directions. Being at a meeting will also provide you with an opportunity to meet their staff and share ideas.

Volunteer

During the summer, the school library media specialist may wish to work as a volunteer at the public library. Such an experience does wonders as a change of pace.

Pinpoint Student Interests

Many times in smaller public libraries, librarian(s) may not be able to keep abreast of the current interests of young people. A school library media specialist can share information on what students are interested in to help the public librarian select materials and resources.

Share Inservice

Invite the public librarians to staff development sessions for school media personnel and to computer education, or other technology-based workshops. The public library can do the same.

Plan Student Visits

Plan a formal visit to the public library as part of the school library media skills program. This is especially important for rural or suburban students who may not be able to visit the public library easily. Arrange work experiences in the public library for students.

JOINT ENDEAVORS

You develop regional library projects. You begin to standardize equipment and cataloging procedures. You share data base searching.

Below are some other possible joint endeavors.

Display Student Art Work

By displaying student art work, the public library shows the community how capable young people are in their artistic endeavors. March, Youth Art Month, may be a good month to do this.

Also, student art and photography are positive activities a public library display can help to publicize.

Promote Programs

Displaying posters and announcements of programs sponsored by other libraries is an effective way of cooperating. Public libraries can also prepare bibliographies of forensic, debate, and speech materials for specific programs.

Sponsor Joint Activities

Planning joint announcements and activities during American Education Week or National Library Week is an excellent way to cooperate. Other special times may be International Children's Book Day and National Children's Book Week. Put up displays in local businesses. Compile a joint community resource directory. Work together on the Summer Reading Program.

Produce Joint Cable TV Programs

If there is a community cable TV access channel, cooperate on producing a cable TV program. It might include storytelling for young (preschool) children, community information, book talks.

Develop Special Projects

LSCA and other funding sources may provide the incentive for special cooperative efforts. Discuss service philosophies for each library involved in such efforts.

Produce a Local Radio Program

Take turns as presenters on a weekly local radio program designed to inform the local community about current best sellers and trends, review books, or provide other books/media insights.

Give Joint Talks on Library Service

Speak together to local service clubs about library service and its value to the community. Work together to handle censorship problems.

A fundamental rule of cooperation is that, once you begin to cooperate, you will find the means to continue, as the benefits are just too good to give up. And the glue that holds it all together is communication. The result, better service to library users, is worth the extra effort.

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CHECK LIST

or, Where You Are Now and Where You Want To Be in the Future

NOW	GOAL FOR FUTURE (The Future Begins Today)	
____	____	Sharing of Borrower's Cards
____	____	Assignment Alerts
____	____	School/Public Library Staff Visits
____	____	Telephone for Reference Questions
____	____	Annual Class Visits to Public Library
____	____	School Cooperation in Public Library Summer Programs
____	____	Joint Celebration of Library Events (National Library Week, etc.)
____	____	Joint Planning of Library Events
____	____	Shared Reading Lists
____	____	Union Lists
____	____	Shared Storytelling, Book Talks
____	____	Shared Displays of Special Materials, Projects
____	____	Social Contact through Professional Organizations or Workshops
____	____	Exchange of Bibliographies
____	____	Use of School Library Materials in Public Library during Summer
____	____	Shared Materials
____	____	Shared Special Materials
____	____	Delivery System for Shared Materials
____	____	Joint Ordering of Materials, Supplies
____	____	Standardization of Equipment
____	____	Cooperative Collection Development
____	____	Standardization of Cataloging
____	____	Joint Cataloging
____	____	Joint Field Trips
____	____	Joint Regional Programs, Activities
____	____	Joint Television and Microcomputer Programs
____	____	Joint Volunteer or Intern Programs
____	____	Cooperative Equipment Repair, Service, and Purchase
____	____	Cooperative Cable Television Access Programs
____	____	Joint Ongoing Planning and Coordination
____	____	Cooperative Goal Setting
____	____	Cooperative Evaluation Procedures
____	____	Joint Newsletter
____	____	Joint Public Relations Efforts
____	____	Personnel Exchange for Workshops, Special Programs
____	____	Joint Grant Applications

This is an open-ended list. You may wish to add other items to it.

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NOTES: